

Why the Jehovah's Witnesses are incorrect teaching that man does not have a soul, and that at death all that comprises man, including soul and spirit, is extinguished and annihilated, and that postmortem man is extinct until those resurrected by God are reassembled at a future date.

While traditional Christians teach that man has a soul - the non-material essence and ego of man which survives death and can go to heaven as an invisible spirit creature - the Jehovah's Witnesses believe, and teach, that no such soul exists; that upon death all of man, every vestige of the human being, including his soul, is annihilated and becomes extinct. They believe that Christendom's notion of a soul, particularly an immortal soul, is the work of the devil and a myth devised by Satan to mislead mankind. However, on examining the Jehovah's Witnesses' own theories in this regard, the Watchtower Society's double standard becomes self-evident because they also teach that their resurrected 144,000 Jehovah's Witnesses (who alone go to heaven) began to be resurrected to heaven as invisible spirit creatures in 1918, and today are being resurrected as invisible spirit creatures bound for heaven, writing, "He [Christ] went to prepare a heavenly place for his associate heirs, 'Christ's body,' for they too will be invisible spirit creatures" (*Let God Be True*, p.138).

In other words, in the traditional Christian world a redeemed man dies and his invisible soul (spirit) goes to an intermediate state where it waits. In the Watchtower World a man dies (one of the so-called 144,000) and his invisible spirit goes to a heavenly afterlife also. Regardless of the labels the Jehovah's Witnesses place on this process, such as calling theirs a "resurrection," the point is that the process is exactly the same: man dies, invisible spirit goes to the afterlife.

With the exception of a few irrelevant labels placed on the process by the Jehovah's Witnesses, there is absolutely no difference in the core concept of a soul (spirit) surviving the body, except the Jehovah's Witnesses claim that with respect to mainstream Christians it doesn't happen at all, and can't happen, and is a lie perpetuated by Satan, but with respect to their 144,000 Jehovah's Witnesses it is happening as we speak, and is sanctioned and performed by God Almighty. It is the extent of such blatant hypocrisy which prompted me to explore in detail the Jehovah's Witnesses' false teaching that man does not have a soul (spirit) that survives death.

Traditional mainstream Christianity teaches that man possesses a soul, which is defined as "the non-material ego of man," (*Pictorial Bible Dictionary (PBD)* at 807), as distinguished from the body. It is the "immaterial principle of life and intelligence (*Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church (Oxford* at 150), and the "real spiritual substance created by God (Genesis 2:7) which united to the body, constitutes a man" (*The Catholic Encyclopedia* at 560). Because "[man] is of the "image of God" (Genesis 1:26,27), the soul is immortal (Matthew 10:28)" (*ibid.*). As God is spirit (John 4:24), man's essential inner attributes are likewise spiritual, in the image of God.

The soul is the primary force of the subjective composite of consciousness, memory, decision, freedom and the very principle of

the human person's activity. It is of the very substance of the human being; thus it is what man makes of himself and what he can become. It is the principle of the human person's being. (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, at 560)

Traditionalists believe the immortal soul is created by God and infused into the human body at conception. While God Almighty, being all powerful, can extinguish the soul at his pleasure, the soul cannot be extinguished or destroyed by secondary sources, that is, anything or anyone other than YHWH, Jehovah God.

According to traditional Christian thought and Scripture, at death the body returns to dust, but the human soul (spirit) migrates to reside in an intermediate state between death and resurrection (*PBD* at 381). Both the wicked unredeemed and saved believers dwell in the intermediate state where they wait for the resurrection; they are not extinguished as the Jehovah's Witnesses teach. "For the righteous the intermediate state is a time of rest and blessedness, holiness and happiness," although one of imperfection, or incompleteness until the soul is reunited with the resurrected body" (*PBD* at 381).

While the intermediate state is for believers a time of freedom from sin and pain, it is nevertheless also one of imperfection, or incompleteness. This is because the soul is without a body, which for man is an abnormal condition, and because Christ's rewards to His people for the labors of this life will not be given until his second coming. As John said at Revelation 14:13, "Blessed are the dead which die in the lord henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works follow them." (*PBD* at 381)

For the ungenerate wicked, on the other hand, the "intermediate state involves conscious suffering and torment (*PBD* at 381).

The Jehovah's Witnesses also teach that "man is a combination of only two things, the 'dust of the ground' and 'the breath of life.'" The combination of these two things (or factors) produced a living soul or creature called man So we see that the claim of the religionists that man has an immortal soul and therefore differs from the beast is not scriptural" *Let God Be True* (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1952), p. 68. They go on to write, "There is nothing that humans have as a result of birth that gives them superiority over beasts when they die" (*Reasoning from the Scriptures* at 383).

While issues related to this false teaching will be explored in depth below, numerous learned theologians have easily dispensed with this novel idea – that man and beast are not different – based on the simple fact that man is created in God's image, a spiritual being of a much higher order, and the animals, or beasts, are not. Scripture is very clear that man has an immortal soul, whereas the beast does not.

The Jehovah's Witnesses are technically "materialists" and subscribe to the doctrine of materialism (not to be confused with greed and the accumulation of things). Materialists deny body/soul dualism and the very existence of a "soul." They believe all cognitive

functions of thought, emotions, will and conscience, etc. are biological consequences of the material self, the body. When the body dies, that which traditionalists call the soul (spirit) simply vanishes and ceases to exist. “For the materialists, the soul, or the conscious life, is but a function of the organism, and necessarily perishes at death” (www.newadvent.org/cathen/07687a.htm).

Materialism is not unique to the Watchtower Society. It can be traced back to the Greek philosopher Epicurus (341-270 B.C.) who taught, among other things, that nothing exists except matter and space (*PBD* at 256). Epicurus believed that ... he could disprove the possibility of the soul's survival after death *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/epicurus/>. Furthermore, “[t]he Epicurean school offers us the most complete and reasoned negation of immortality among ancient philosophers” (newadvent.org/cathen/07687.htm at 3). Epicureanism was widespread and popular during the time of Christ, and it is logical to conclude that the Jehovah's Witnesses' doctrine of materialism is rooted in this Greek philosophy.

Similarly, the ancient Sadducees, a religious party that existed during the time of Christ and which had members in the Jewish council called the Sanhedrin (which caused Christ to be put to death) denied “personal immortality, and retribution in a future life (*PBD* at 741), just like the Jehovah's Witnesses. “The doctrine of the Sadducees,” wrote Josephus, “is this, that souls die with the bodies,” (*Antiq. XVIII. 1, 4*); and again, “they also take away the belief of the immortal duration of the soul, and the punishments and rewards in Hades” (*Jewish War, ii,i,14*) (*PBD* at 741), just as the Jehovah's Witnesses teach.

In contemporary times the Jehovah's Witnesses are allied with secular atheists and other non-Christians on the margins who go to great lengths to deny the existence of the Christian immortal soul, or any soul for that matter, claiming that the Christian soul is nothing more than the product of an organism, secretions of the brain and such, basing their claims in part on “neurophysiology,” (*Restoring the Soul to Christianity*, DR 502, J.P. Moreland, <http://www.equip.org/articles/restoring-the-soul-to-christianity/>).

Lastly, there has been a recent rash of materialist apologetics – evangelical preachers – who argue that Christian body/soul dualism is false, that a person is not a composite of body and soul, that the soul does not survive the death of the body, and the resurrected unsaved wicked are not punished eternally, or at all, but are simply extinguished, annihilated, being treated to a kinder, gentler, one-size-fits-all form of punishment. Of course it is no surprise that such modern-day preachers are attempting to overturn 2,000 years of Christian theology, for the Bible warns us that “in the last days, false teachers and false prophets will appear among us (2 Peter 2:1; Matthew 24:11).

Not only do the Jehovah's Witnesses deny the existence of a soul (spirit), but they also claim, against scriptural evidence to the contrary, that man's spirit given to man by God is only an “active life-force” sustained by breathing (*Reasoning* at 383). Spirit, to the Jehovah's Witnesses, is akin to an electrical current such as that from a battery which powers a radio, the human. Take away electricity and the radio dies and ceases to transmit. They write, “like electricity, the spirit has no feeling and cannot think” (*Soul and Spirit: What do These Terms Really Mean?* http://www.watchtower.org/e/bh/appendix_07.htm). For Jehovah's Witnesses,

the spirit is nothing more than “an invisible force (the spark of life) that animates all living creatures” (*Spirit Identified* at 12.) But this is not a Bible teaching.

Traditional Christians recognize in Scripture that the terms “soul” and “spirit” are used interchangeably where appropriate - the soul is the spirit, and the spirit is the soul - depending on context and other things. Furthermore, traditionalists understand correctly that the spirit is the repository of man's emotional and intellectual aspects, such as the rational and contemplating self, and a complex of attitudes and will power (*PBD* at 807). The Jehovah's Witnesses claim that all of these attributes become non-existent at death (*Reasoning* at 382-383, 100). Accordingly, even though the Bible states clearly that the spirit returns to God who gave it (*Ecclesiastes* 12:7), that at his death Jesus said, “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit [Greek, *pneuma*] (*Luke* 23:46), and upon his death he “gave up his spirit” (*Matthew* 27:50, *NAB*), and the apostle John wrote that Jesus “handed over” his spirit (*John* 19:30), the Jehovah's Witnesses teach that what Jesus really meant was “that he knew that, when he died, his future life prospects rested entirely with God” (*Reasoning* at 383-384). They make this claim even though Jesus was the God-man - God the Son - who resurrected himself (*John* 2:19-22). Also noteworthy is the fact that the Jehovah's Witnesses fail to defend their theory by citing any relevant Scripture.

The Jehovah's Witnesses' doctrine of materialism comes into play during two time periods. The first, which this paper addresses primarily, involves the intermediate stage of man's postmortem life, that period of time between death and resurrection, after the body dies and when the soul (spirit) dwells in an intermediate state. The second, with which this paper is not concerned, covers post-resurrection man and related topics such as the immortality of saints and sinners; whether the unredeemed are punished for sins committed in this body, and the duration and nature of that punishment, and similar issues. While these issues may be touched on where relevant here, these latter topics go beyond the scope of this writing.

BIBLICAL PROOF THAT AN IMMATERIAL DISEMBODIED SELF SURVIVES THE DEATH OF A MAN

There exists a significant amount of Scriptural evidence that upon death man continues in a disembodied state in an afterlife, also referred to as the nether world. The Jehovah's Witnesses mistakenly approach the issue at the outset with linguistic arguments, examining the definitions of Hebrew and Greek words foremost and initially, often out of context. For example, a primary tool used to deny the existence of a soul is the Hebrew term *nephesh*, the word most often translated “soul” in the Old Testament. They rely heavily on Genesis 2:7: “And Jehovah God proceeded to form the man out of dust from the ground and to blow into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man came to be a living soul.”

The Jehovah's Witnesses contend Adam was not given a soul, but merely came to be a living soul. Their error lies in elevating one instance of *nephesh* over 750 other uses of the word, and other words and concepts and illustrations that speak of a soul which man possesses. They also attribute only three definitions to *nephesh* (soul) when there are many others, and they consistently translate *nephesh* as “soul” notwithstanding nuanced shades of meaning and context which mandate a different usage, and/or word to avoid confusion. (Ironically, Genesis 2:7, which the Jehovah's Witnesses rely heavily on to disprove the existence of the

soul, is the same verse many traditionalists use to prove the opposite; that God breathed a soul (spirit) into Adam and thereby created a living being: “But it is a spirit in man, the breath of the Almighty, that gives him understanding” (Job 32:8).

But these issues pertaining to *nephesh* (Hebrew, soul), and *ruach* (Hebrew, spirit), *psuche* (Greek, soul), and *pneuma* (Greek, spirit) will be addressed later in this treatise. The questions one must ask initially are whether the Bible provides evidence of an afterlife for the human soul, whether beings, spiritual entities, subsist in an intermediate state after death, or, whether there is no such thing as a soul as Christians understand it, especially one that survives death, as the Jehovah's Witnesses mistakenly believe; and whether the decaying body returns to dust and all identifying characteristics of man are annihilated, made extinct and simply become non-existent.

As Scripture, including the Old Testament, makes abundantly clear there is a pre-resurrection afterlife, and the soul (spirit) as understood by Christendom continues on after death for the righteous and wicked in a disembodied, immaterial state. Any analysis pertaining to materialism and dualism must be undertaken in the context of this obvious fact.

A careful, open-minded study of the Bible makes it evident that man has a soul (and is a soul), a scriptural truth revealed progressively, like much of Scripture, especially in the New Testament Christian revelation which did much to clarify the dichotomous nature of man. Literal exposition, parables, allegory and metaphor all combine as a powerful testament to the existence of the human soul (spirit) before and after death, each adding weight to the sum total of the argument. As will be shown, contrary to the Jehovah's Witnesses and materialists of every stripe, over 2 billion Christians, backed by 2,000 years of theology and the Holy Bible have been correct all along.

“The idea of a distinction between the soul, the immaterial principle of life, and the body, is of great antiquity, though only gradually expressed with any precision. Hebrew thought made little of this distinction, and there is practically no specific teaching on the subject in the Bible beyond an underlying assumption of some form of afterlife” (*Oxford* at 1520). However, these assumptions of afterlife were based on sound scriptural evidence as will be shown, not invented out of whole cloth.

When analyzing the following verses, keep in mind Christ's words at John 11:26 where he said in part that “everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.” Since men's physical, mortal bodies die, Jesus must be referring to the soul (spirit) which survives the death of the body; that is the only manner in which a believer will never die. Under the Jehovah's Witnesses' annihilation theory, those believers Jesus spoke to would have technically been dead for at least 2,000 years until the resurrection, which can't be true and would contradict Jesus' statement. The Jehovah's Witnesses have a tendency to say “that's not what that really means,” and turn a reasonable understanding upside down, confusing what otherwise is rather straightforward. However, the prudent approach to reading Scripture is to read it as a normal, reasonable person would, looking for the most logical, common-sense meaning in context. This the Jehovah's Witnesses repeatedly fail to do.

Words other than *nephesh* in the Old Testament are used when referring to departed souls,

such as *rephaim*, often translated in the English as 'shades' or 'healers.' *Rephaim* are ghosts according to *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of the Old and New Testament Words* (*Vine's*) and very much in existence according to the Old Testament as seen by Isaiah 14:9-10 (*ESV*), which completely disproves the Jehovah's Witnesses' theory that only extinction follows man at death. In speaking of the king of Babylon, Isaiah wrote:

9 Sheol beneath is stirred up
 to meet you when you come;
it rouses the shades to greet you,
 all who were leaders of the earth;
it raises from their thrones
 all who were kings of the nations.
10 All of them will answer
 and say to you:
'You too have become as weak as we!
You have become like us!'

This passage in and of itself proves the Jehovah's Witnesses wrong. Here, the shades obviously exist and were not extinguished into nothingness. They even speak, and therefore think. The Watchtower leadership is fully aware of this insurmountable obstacle to their theology. To circumvent the problem they translate *rephaim* as "those impotent in death," but this does not help them in the slightest because it only describes one condition or attribute of the departed, that they are in a weakened condition, as seen by the answer the shades gave - that the king of Babylon would become weak like they had become. Nothing in these verses remotely suggests that these *rephaim*, or shades, don't exist; it's impossible, even if the shades are impotent with respect to their powers. Impotent does not mean annihilated, it does not mean nonexistent. Furthermore, Almighty God, YHWH, does not lie; his word is truth (Titus 1:2; John 17:17). If shades do not exist in the nether world of Sheol, he would never convey to his people that they did, and that they spoke and are conscious. God is telling us in no uncertain terms that an immaterial, conscious entity survives the death of the body.

That the departed dead spirits in Sheol are conscious and communicate and think is reiterated at Isaiah 29:4 (*KJV*) where God warned the inhabitants of Jerusalem of their impending destruction, writing through the prophet, "Prostrate you shall speak from the earth, and from the base dust your words shall come. Your voice shall be like a ghost's (Hebrew, *owb*) (*Vine's* at 178), from the earth, and your words like chirping from the dust." (*NAB*). According to *Vine's*, "*Owb* means 'spirit' (of the dead); necromancy, pit. This word usually represents the troubled spirit (or spirits) of the dead. This meaning appears unquestionably in Isaiah 29:4" (*ibid.*).

The psalmist at Psalm 88:11 "seeks to persuade God to act out of concern for divine honor: the shades (*rephaim*) give you no worship, so keep me alive to offer you praise" (*NAB* notes 8, 11-13). "Do you work wonders for the dead? Do the shades (*rephaim*) arise and praise you?" Had the shades (*rephaim*) not existed in Sheol this question could not have been asked. Far from non-existent, the departed dead, the wicked unredeemed shades, are impotent with respect to gratitude, praise and hope toward God, "For Sheol does not thank you, death does not praise you; those that go down to the pit do not hope for your

faithfulness” (*Isaiah 38:18, ESV*).

For the wicked, their weakened condition is likened to “forgetfulness,” where God works no wonders for the shades (*rephaim*) who are unwilling and unable to express their love for God. “Is your love proclaimed in the grave, your fidelity in the tomb? Are faithfulness in Abaddon? Are your wonders known in the darkness, or your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?” (*Psalm 88:10-12, ESV*). The resurrection of the dead (as figuratively applied to the restoration of Israel in messianic times (*NAB* notes) envisions conscious and singing shades in the land of the departed (the netherworld) which gives birth to newly resurrected bodies, shades that are reunited with risen corpses: “But your dead shall shall live, their corpses shall rise; awake and sing, you who lie in the dust. For your dew is a dew of light, and the land of shades (*rephaim*) gives birth” (*Isaiah 26:19, NAB*).

Even Job, a blameless and upright man, acknowledged the existence of the departed dead, the shades, in Sheol, where, in his reply to Boldad's third speech he said, “The shades (*rephaim*) beneath writhe in terror, the waters and their inhabitants. Naked before him is the nether world (Sheol), and Abaddon has no covering.” (*Job 26:5,6, NAB*). Not only do shades exist, but they exhibit emotions and tremble.

Similarly, the inspired writers of the Book of Proverbs were fully aware that the departed dead, the shades, reside in Sheol, the nether world; they were not annihilated, they did not become extinct at death. Speaking of the ways of the adulteress, Proverbs 2:18 provides: “For her path sinks down to death, and her footsteps lead to the shades (*rephaim*) (*NAB*). Referring to those who live a life of folly, Proverbs 9:18 warns, “Little he knows that the shades are there, that in the depths of the nether world (sheol) are her guests” (*NAB*). And Proverbs 21:16 is an unambiguous warning, “The man who strays from the way of good sense will abide in the assembly of the shades (*rephaim*).

One common misconception is that Sheol (Hebrew) is a place where only the wicked, unredeemed go, but that is not the case (*PBD* at 784). The grieving patriarch Jacob was inconsolable when told of his son Joseph's (fabricated) death, stating, “No, I will go down mourning to my son in the nether world (Sheol) (*Genesis 37:35*). Jacob, son of Isaac and father of twelve sons who in turn would father the twelve tribes of Israel, believed his eleventh son, Joseph, was dead and departed to Sheol, not extinct, and his grief was such that he wished to join him. And Job, while enduring excruciating torment, pleaded to God for shelter in the nether world of Sheol. He did not want to go there to be tormented further, but to escape the agony and torment he was suffering on earth, and then return: “Oh, that you would hide me in the nether world and keep me sheltered till your wrath is past,” (*Job 14:13*). His agony was so great he wondered why he wasn't delivered a stillborn baby; then he would find rest in Sheol:” For then I would have lain down and been quiet; I would have slept; then I would have been at rest. (*Job 3:13, ESV*). One cannot be extinct and non-existent and yet enjoy restful sleep and later return to the world when God's wrath is over. It's not possible.

King David was fully aware that Sheol was a place to which souls depart, writing, “For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption,” (*Psalm 16:10, ESV*). He repeatedly speaks of Sheol as a place, as a concrete figure of speech, as a destination

from which souls are brought up, and prevented from going down into (see Psalms 139:8, 49:15, 86:13). God, through David, would never have uttered these words if no such place existed where souls go. Sheol is a reality, a destination for the departed dead made abundantly clear at Psalm 139:8: “If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, you are there.” Annihilationism cannot be read into these verses.

Rachel cannot be non-existent as her voice is heard in Ramah: “Thus says the Lord, “A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more (Jeremiah 31:15, *ESV*). Ramah is “a village about five miles north of Jerusalem, where Rachel was buried (1 Samuel 10, 2). Rachel is said to mourn for her children since she was the ancestress of Ephraim, the chief of the northern tribes. Matthew 2:18 applies this verse to the slaughter of the innocent by Herod” (*NAB* notes, 31-15).

And the great prophet Ezekiel was instructed by Almighty God to lament the wicked of Egypt destined for the pit of the nether world. A place in Sheol “shall be made them for all their hordes” (Ezekiel 32:20, *NAB*). These Egyptian hordes cannot be non-existent because “from the midst of the nether world the mighty warriors shall speak to Egypt: “Whom do you excel in beauty? Come down, you and your allies, lie with the uncircumcised, with those slain by the sword” (vv. 20-21). Those that go down to the pit are not only conscious, but experience emotion, as they “bear their disgrace with those who go down to the pit” (Ezekiel 32:24, *NAB*).

It is not credible to believe those destined for Sheol are destined to non-existence because Psalm 49:14-20 tells us that they are akin to sheep herded into their new palace, indicative of the nether world of Sheol. Psalm 49:14:20 is a frank admonishment to the wealthy wicked, whose trust in riches rather than Almighty God, YHWH, is folly because their wealth cannot accompany any of them down to where their ancestors are:

- 14 This is the destiny of those who trust in folly,
the end of those so pleased with their wealth.
- 15 Like sheep they are herded into Sheol,
Where death will be their shepherd.
Straight to the grave they descend,
where their form will waste away.
Sheol will be their palace.
- 16 But God will redeem my life,
will take me from the power of Sheol.
- 17 Do not fear when others become rich,
when the wealth of their houses grows great.
- 18 When they die they will take nothing with them,
their wealth will not follow them down.
- 19 When living, they congratulate themselves and say:
“All praise you, you do so well.”
- 20 But they will join the company of their forebears,
never again to see the light.

Verse 20, whereby those going down “will join the company of their forebears” is to be taken literally; it's not simply a figure of speech. Similarly, when Abraham died and was “taken to his kinsmen,” (Genesis 25:8 and many other references in the Bible where those who die go to join their ancestors), he actually did join his ancestors as a disembodied immaterial spirit.

“Necromancy was a form of witchcraft and was considered as one of the “black” or diabolical arts. Etymologically, the term signifies conversing with the dead for purposes of consultation or divination. The Mosaic Law sternly forbade such a practice (Deuteronomy 18:10, 11) (*PBD* at 578).

10 Let there not be found among you anyone who immolates his son or daughter in the fire, nor a fortune-teller, soothsayer, charmer, diviner, or caster of spells, nor one who consults ghosts and spirits or seeks oracle from the dead. (*NAB*; see also Leviticus 19:31, 20:6).

God does not say that such ghosts, spirits and the departed dead don't exist, so don't bother trying to conjure them up. But rather, he's saying that they do exist and he does not want man to bring them up or communicate with them. 1 Samuel 28:8-19 illustrates rather succinctly that the departed dead (the prophet Samuel) exist as conscious beings. King Saul sought out the witch of Endor so that she might conjure up the dead prophet. Saul was at war with the Philistines and God had abandoned him. Saul wanted Samuel to tell him what to do. Samuel appeared and gave Saul the bad news, that the Lord was going to deliver Israel and the army of Israel into the hand of the Philistines, and Saul and his sons would die the next day.

8 So Saul disguised himself and put on other garments and went, he and two men with him. And they came to the woman by night. And he said, “Divine for me by a spirit and bring up for me whomever I shall name to you.” 9 The woman said to him, “Surely you know what Saul has done, how he has cut off the mediums and the necromancers from the land. Why then are you laying a trap for my life to bring about my death?” 10 But Saul swore to her by the LORD, “As the LORD lives, no punishment shall come upon you for this thing.” 11 Then the woman said, “Whom shall I bring up for you?” He said, “Bring up Samuel for me.” 12 When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice. And the woman said to Saul, “Why have you deceived me? You are Saul.” 13 The king said to her, “Do not be afraid. What do you see?” And the woman said to Saul, “I see a god coming up out of the earth.” 14 He said to her, “What is his appearance?” And she said, “An old man is coming up, and he is wrapped in a robe.” And Saul knew that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground and paid homage.

15 Then Samuel said to Saul, “Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?” Saul answered, “I am in great distress, for the Philistines are warring against me, and God has turned away from me and answers me no more, either by prophets or by dreams. Therefore I

have summoned you to tell me what I shall do.” 16 And Samuel said, “Why then do you ask me, since the LORD has turned from you and become your enemy? 17 The LORD has done to you as he spoke by me, for the LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbor, David. 18 Because you did not obey the voice of the LORD and did not carry out his fierce wrath against Amalek, therefore the LORD has done this thing to you this day. 19 Moreover, the LORD will give Israel also with you into the hand of the Philistines, and tomorrow you and your sons shall be with me. The LORD will give the army of Israel also into the hand of the Philistines.” (1 Samuel 28:8-19, *ESV*)

The Jehovah's Witnesses argue that the prophet Samuel could not have been conjured up because nothing survives death, and therefore the spirit of Samuel did not exist; his so-called appearing and speaking was just a trick of some sort and Saul merely let himself be deceived. The voice Saul allegedly heard, they claim, was that of an imposter” (*Reasoning* at 385).

Given the substantial body of evidence cited thus far, the Jehovah's Witnesses' claim is unfounded. We can be certain that Samuel in spirit appeared and was a true prophet of God and not a false prophet or deceiver because his prophecy was true and fulfilled. Israel was given into the hands of the Philistines, and Saul and his sons were indeed killed just as Samuel foretold.

31 Now the Philistines were fighting against Israel, and the men of Israel fled before the Philistines and fell slain on Mount Gilboa. 2 And the Philistines overtook Saul and his sons, and the Philistines struck down Jonathan and Abinadab and Malchi-shua, the sons of Saul. 3 The battle pressed hard against Saul, and the archers found him, and he was badly wounded by the archers. 4 Then Saul said to his armor-bearer, “Draw your sword, and thrust me through with it, lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and mistreat me.” But his armor-bearer would not, for he feared greatly. Therefore Saul took his own sword and fell upon it. 5 And when his armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell upon his sword and died with him. 6 Thus Saul died, and his three sons, and his armor-bearer, and all his men, on the same day together. (1 Samuel 31:1-6, *ESV*)

The test for determining whether Samuel was a false prophet, or a true prophet who claims to speak for God, is found at Deuteronomy 18:21-22: “Even though a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if his oracle is not fulfilled or verified, it is an oracle which the Lord did not speak.” “True prophets were accredited in that their prophecies were fulfilled (Deuteronomy 18:20ff) (*PBD* at 688). “False prophets, on the other hand, would find that their prophecies were not accredited or fulfilled (*ibid*). Accordingly, Samuel, who was reiterating the message God sent through him, was a true prophet because what he said came true. He was not a deceiver or an imposter. And God would never deceive his people who

read these verses if Samuel did not exist. God does not lie.

“It should be noted that “[h]uman beings cannot communicate at will with the souls of the dead. God may, however, permit a departed soul to appear to the living and even disclose things unknown to them. Saul's own prohibition of necromancy and divination (v.3) was in keeping with consistent teaching of the Old Testament. If we are to credit the reality of the apparition to Saul, it was due, not to the summons of the witch, but to God's will; the woman merely furnished the occasion” (*NAB* notes 28:12).

Given the evidence thus far it is clear that any claim by the Jehovah's Witnesses that man's immaterial self does not survive death is simply not true. While the Old Testament offered a vague conception of the body/soul dichotomy, they knew quite well that departed, disembodied spirits continue on in the afterlife although their understanding lacked the forceful clarity found in the New Testament. Like so much of Scripture, revelation of the dichotomous nature of man, and our increased understanding of that, has been progressive, much like our understanding of the Holy Trinity, or what the Apostle Paul called the “mystery of Christ” (*Ephesians* 3:4,5). There's nothing wrong with progressive revelation. That's what God intended.

BODY SOUL DUALISM IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The most emphatic scriptural proof of body-soul dualism is found at Matthew 10:28 where Jesus said, “[Do] not be afraid of those who can kill the body but cannot kill the soul (*psuche*); rather, be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna.” Jesus here reaffirms the traditionalist doctrine that the created immortal soul joined to the body at conception is not destructible by secondary sources – anything other than YHWH, God Almighty. That is the focus of the first part of the sentence - do not fear secondary sources (man) who can kill the body but cannot kill the soul, which can only be destroyed by God in *gehenna*, however “destruction” is defined.

The fact that Christ said the soul remains after the body dies is strong evidence disproving the Jehovah's Witnesses' and all materialists' theory that the soul dies with the body. It also proves that body and soul are not the same thing; the soul cannot only be the body/person as the Jehovah's Witnesses incorrectly teach. If the soul is the body/person, then nothing would remain after death, but Jesus taught the exact opposite; the soul remains.

The Jehovah's Witnesses also argue that the “soul” refers to the “life one enjoys.” But the first part of Matthew 10:28 disproves this theory as well. If the Jehovah's Witnesses' limited concept of soul (*psuche*) is the “life one enjoys,” but the body is killed, there can't be any life remaining to be enjoyed because they claim, falsely, that all vestiges of man either return to dust or are completely annihilated. The Jehovah's Witnesses teach that body/person and soul are the same thing, but Jesus said the opposite: the soul (spirit) remains after the body is killed, and therefore the body/person and soul are not always the same thing.

Christian theologians have recognized the obvious for centuries. The Greek word for 'body' is *soma* (*Strong and Vine's*, 4983). According to *Vine's*, “the body is not the man, for he himself can exist apart from his body (2 Corinthians 12:2-3). (9) The body is an essential

part of the man and therefore the redeemed are not perfected until the resurrection, Hebrews 11:40; no man in his final state will be without his body, John 5:28-29; Revelation 20:13. (10) The word is also used of physical nature, as distinct (10a) from *pneuma*, the spiritual nature, e.g. 1 Thessalonians 5:23. (10c) *Soma*, 'body' and *pneuma*, 'spirit,' may separated" (*Vine's* at 245). Jesus proved at Matthew 10:28 that the Jehovah's Witnesses' theology is illogical. Anyone exercising a measure of common sense should be able to recognize this.

At Matthew 10:28 Jesus was instructing his disciples to have courage under pending persecution for their faith and proclamation of the Gospel; to fear no man. Fear should be reserved for Almighty God, Yahweh, who, being Almighty, has the power to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna, which man cannot.

The apostle Paul's explicit teachings on the issue of body-soul dualism, and that the immaterial self that is the soul (spirit) can subsist apart from the body and is not made extinct at death, is in full accord with Matthew 10:28. Illustrative is 2 Corinthians 12:1-4 where there can be no mistake that Paul believed a person's soul (spirit) can leave the body, and that the soul (spirit) is actually "in" the body. Speaking of his vision and revelations, where Paul (presumably) was caught up to the third heaven, Paul wrote: "I must go on boasting. Though whether in the body or out of the body I do not know...."

That the individual could leave the body could not, and would not, have been stated if that were not possible. Paul would have been illogical, and scripturally misleading, if that transmigrating "self" or "ego" did not exist, as the Jehovah's Witnesses erroneously claim. The same line of reasoning is stated at Philippians 1:21-24 where Paul's desire was to "depart and be with Christ." The only reasonable and normal interpretation recognizes that there is some thing that departs the body, or can exist outside of the body, and that a soul (spirit) actually exists notwithstanding what the Jehovah's Witnesses teach.

Paul also, in no uncertain terms, makes it abundantly clear at 2 Corinthians 5:1-10 that a man resides in a "tent" or "tabernacle," and while these verses deal predominantly with the resurrection, they also address the pre-resurrection intermediate state.

5 For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. 2 Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, 3 because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. 4 For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. 5 Now the one who has fashioned us for this very purpose is God, who has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

6 Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. 7 For we live by faith, not by sight. 8 We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. 9 So we make it our goal to

please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it.

10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad. (*NIV*)

Paul's statements that "while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord," and that we would be "away from the body and at home with the Lord" (*NAB* "leave the body"), and at Philippians 1:21-24 that it was Paul's desire to "depart and be with Christ" leaves no room for a two-thousand-year, or more, gap between Paul's departure and his being with the Lord, which the Jehovah's Witnesses would have you believe would occur at the resurrection. No such gap can reasonably be read into these verses; absolutely nothing even remotely suggests such a hiatus. To the contrary, at Philippians 1:21 Paul said "to die is gain"; but two thousand years of nonexistence is not gain but a loss. Paul wrote only of two choices, a) when in the body one is away from the Lord, and b) when with the Lord one is away from the body. And the trip is immediate.

Jesus on the cross made this clear when he told the criminal at his side, "I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). Virtually every Christian denomination on earth and biblical scholars world wide have known this to mean that the criminal, who experienced a death-bed conversion, would depart his body and be in the company of Jesus' soul in the intermediate state that day, not two thousand years in the future.

The Jehovah's Witnesses, quite infamously, chose, in their New World Translation Bible (*NWT*) to insert the comma after the word "today" so that it reads "I tell you today, you will be with me in paradise." This incredibly awkward construction is not normal, and should not be given credence in light of the aforementioned evidence that the transition between death and being with Christ is immediate – Jesus was not referring to the resurrection in the distant future. After all, he said earlier in his ministry that whoever "lives and believes me will never die" (John 11:26), which necessitates the criminal's continued existence, and which could only refer to his soul (spirit) continuing without extinction. Traditionalists have a reasonable and normal understanding of Jesus' words, but the Jehovah's Witnesses do not. But for the sake of argument, even if Jesus said, "I tell you today, you will be with me in paradise," nothing in this sentence prevents the criminal from joining Christ that very day. ("I tell you today, you will be with me in paradise," said Jesus. "When?" asked the criminal, to which Jesus replied, "Today, very soon, in a few hours.")

The Jehovah's Witnesses teach that the story of the rich man (Dives) and Lazarus is a parable where the rich man represents the Pharisees, and Lazarus the common Jewish people who repented and became followers of Jesus. Their deaths were merely symbolic and represent a change in circumstances, a role reversal for the favored and despised (*Reasoning* at 175).

19 "There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. 20 And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, 21 who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores. 22 The poor man died and was carried by

the angels to Abraham's side.^[a] The rich man also died and was buried, 23 and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. 24 And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.' 25 But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. 26 And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.' 27 And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house— 28 for I have five brothers^[b]—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.' 29 But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' 30 And he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' 31 He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.'" (ESV)

The Jehovah's Witnesses are correct in recognizing the symbolic role reversal between the rich man and Lazarus. The reversed conditions the two men find themselves in are a stark forewarning, and mirror the beatitudes at Luke 6:20, 21; 24, 25. "Blessed are you who are now hungry, for you will be satisfied. Woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. Woe to you who are filled now, for you will be hungry." But the story addresses many other issues other than a role reversal, and is packed with useful insight, the most obvious being that the departed, conscious, dead like the rich man and Lazarus, and Abraham, reside in an intermediate state.

Actually, mainstream theology agrees, somewhat, that verses 30 and 31 pertain to the Christian message. The Roman Catholic Church and other denominations understand these verses to be "[a] foreshadowing ... of the rejection of the call to repentance even after Jesus' resurrection" (NAB notes 16, 30-31). But that's not the sole lesson to be learned. One of the more salient points made is a stark warning to take care of the needy and desperate if it is within one's means, or you might suffer the same fate as the compassion-less rich man.

Even though most consider the story to be a parable, some interpret the rendering literally, and the Jehovah's Witnesses attack such literalists, assuming that all Christians regard it as historical fact, which they don't all believe to be so. Even if it were meant to be taken literally, which is possible, the Jehovah's Witnesses attempt to strike it down in its entirety simply because it contains metaphor within the story. In other words, they argue the story can't be real because those enjoying divine favor could not literally fit on Abraham's bosom, and a mere drop of water could never quench the rich man's thirst or survive the parched literal heat of the literal burning fire (*Reasoning* at 174-175). But these illustrations are metaphor or figures of speech peculiar to the times. Lying in Abraham's bosom is a term of endearment, representing a special relationship ("The Son, who is in the bosom of the Father (John 1:18). The drop of water on the tip of Lazarus' finger symbolizes the abject

desperation and despair the tormented rich man is enduring – his anguish is such that he'll "take anything." And the burning flames represent the punishment awaiting those doomed to perdition. (While some Christian denominations continue to believe the fires of hell are literal flames of fire, conservatives generally do not.) The point is, even a literal translation of the story containing figures of speech and metaphor to enhance the meaning would pass muster.

We know dead Lazarus and the rich man are in the intermediate state because the rich man refers to his five living brothers still on earth, so it must take place prior to the resurrection. As a parable the story is no less truthful as were all of Christ's parables, and this one is meant to convey important scriptural truth. Jesus never lied or mislead his people, which is what he would have done with this story if all men's souls (spirits) are extinguished at death.

As stated, the story of postmortem Lazarus and the rich man illustrates that departed souls are conscious and can experience comfort, torment and anguish, and they are capable of communication. It tells us Abraham is alive, just as Jesus reiterated what God said in the present tense, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." He is not the God of the dead," Jesus said, "but of the living" (Matthew 22:32, *ESV*) ("to [God] all are alive") (Luke 20:38, *NAB*). Here God is speaking of two things, a) the resurrection, and b) the living soul (spirit) that animates the body, the soul being the true person.

While the general discussion of Matthew 22:32 pertained to the future resurrection, it also refers to those in the intermediate state; it is only the dead physical body that is resurrected, to be rejoined and animated by the soul. But it is the soul (spirit) which God regards as being presently "alive" because a "body without a spirit is dead." (James 2:26). Because God and Jesus spoke in the present tense of the departed as living, these specific words could not have referred to a future resurrection but dealt, specifically and by necessity, with souls in the intermediate state which play a vital role in the future resurrection; the eventual soul (spirit) and body reunion.

But the primary reason the Jehovah's Witnesses view the parable of the rich man and Lazarus as such a threat to their theology and dismiss it so casually is because it clearly states that man will have had sufficient warning in the present age (*PBD* at 480), and because the story teaches that man's destiny is settled at death. There is no "second chance" (*ibid.*). "Human beings die once, then after this the judgment (Hebrews 9:27). This Bible teaching is in direct contradiction to the Jehovah's Witnesses' salvation plan (one of several) which is premised on a "second chance" at salvation for virtually all of mankind, most of whom will supposedly be resurrected on earth where they will reside during the 1,000-year-reign.

In addition, what most non-Jehovah's Witnesses don't realize is that the Jehovah's Witnesses teach, incorrectly, that "man is acquitted of his sins at death" (*Insight*, 788; *Reasoning*, 338), taking Romans 6:7 completely out of context, and accordingly no man would be punished for sins committed in this life, only those sins committed during the 1,000-year-reign, which is a very attractive recruitment tool, to say the least. To them, man's death in this life is sufficient punishment, and thus all unredeemed men are punished equally, regardless of the degree of their sins.

Needless to say, the Jehovah's Witnesses' bizarre theories in this matter are completely unbiblical, issues addressed in great detail in the accompanying online treatise entitled "*Why the Jehovah's Witnesses are wrong teaching that only 144,000 go to heaven, and much more*" which can be found here: <http://144000.110mb.com/144000/index.html#home>

For purposes of this paper, suffice it to say that it is not death that acquits (declared not guilty) redeemed, believing Christians of their sins, but the death and blood of Christ, which is a fundamental Christian doctrine that continues to elude the Jehovah's Witnesses. As Paul wrote at Romans 5:16 and elsewhere, it was the "gift" of his death for our sins that "brought acquittal," not man's death.

But to reiterate, there is no second chance, which is one of the messages of the rich man and Lazarus, and the Jehovah's Witnesses don't want to hear that. "Scripture represents the state of the lost after death as a fixed state," (Luke 16:19-31) (*PBD* at 381). "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ so that each one may receive recompense according to what he did in the body, whether good or evil" (2 Corinthians 5:10). "Now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2). "The Lord knows how to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment (2 Peter 2:9). Obviously, there is no second chance or probationary period. The final judgment will be determined by what man does in this life, in this body, not some future state of existence (see also Matthew 7:22,23; 25:41-46).

In this regard the story of the rich man and Lazarus is toxic to the Watchtower Society and completely undermines their religion, which explains their motive for dismissing it, including the all-too-obvious underlying message that, like Lazarus and the rich man, the departed conscious dead migrate to an intermediate state; they are not annihilated, they do not become extinguished. The supernatural order for departed humans does in fact exist today.

The message that the departed are currently alive spiritually is driven home in the account of the transfiguration of Jesus, the appearance of the living Moses and Elijah, the sound of God's voice, and Peter, James and John bearing witness to the event. At Matthew 16:28, Jesus spoke with his disciples and said, "Amen, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom." In the next sentence Matthew writes:

17 And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. 2 And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. 3 And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. 4 And Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." 5 He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son,[a] with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." 6 When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified. 7 But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise, and have no fear." 8 And when they lifted up their

eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.

9 And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, “Tell no one the vision, until the Son of Man is raised from the dead.” (RSV)

The Jehovah's Witnesses teach that even though Christ was actually there, “Moses and Elijah, who were dead, were not literally present. They were represented in vision” (*Insight* at 1121). But if Moses and Elijah were actually present at the transfiguration and are not dead, and if their appearance and the transfiguration event were not mere visions of the mind, their materialist, annihilation theory is proven wrong.

First, it is well known that while Moses died a physical death, Elijah did not. Elijah never died (*PBD* at 246). And as the previous discussion has made clear, man, including Moses, might die a physical death but live on in a disembodied state.

Secondly, the Greek word for this vision is *harfoma* (3705), and “as a noun signifies that which is seen and denotes (1) 'a spectacle, sight,'” Matthew 17:9; Acts 7:31 (“sight”) (*Vine's* at 180). But this vision was seen with the eyes, not the mind. Peter verified, at 2 Peter 1:16-18, the historical accuracy of what they witnessed – with their own eyes, including the appearance of Moses and Elijah, where Peter wrote, “For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,” we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.” “[The transfiguration's] historical reality is attested to by the Apostle Peter,” (*PBD* at 867).

Third, any claim that the events of Christ's transfiguration were forward-projected visions of the resurrected likewise fails because according to the Jehovah's Witnesses, Jesus Christ returned (allegedly) invisibly (at the second coming) in 1914. By the time Moses and Elijah are resurrected and can stand in the presence of the Jehovah's Witnesses' version of Jesus, Christ would be invisible to Peter, James and John.

Fourth, the transfiguration event could not be a post-resurrection vision because Elijah and Moses spoke to Jesus about his departure, or exodus – his pending death by crucifixion, resurrection and ascension. “And behold, two men were conversing with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his exodus he was going to accomplish in Jerusalem” (Luke 9:30, 31). If the transfiguration was a forward-projected post-resurrection vision in the minds of Peter, James and John, it would have been pointless to discuss Jesus' “pending” exodus that would have happened 2,000 years or more earlier. And if Moses and Elijah did not exist at all, Jesus would have been delusional speaking to them. Such a scenario is neither logical nor possible.

Finally, because Jesus does not lie or deceive his people, even pursuant to a vision of the mind 2,000 years ago, that visible real-time appearance of Moses and Elijah is intended to reflect reality and truth. If they did not exist, God would not have caused them to appear; he would not have intentionally mislead his people into believing they exist when they don't.

God does not lie.

The evidence that a disembodied soul (spirit) survives human death is substantial. The inspired writer of Hebrews made it unmistakeably clear that the spirits of the redeemed go to heaven “[In] the exalted description of the heavenly goal which lies before the church (Hebrews 12:22-24), the blessed dead are referred to as “the spirits of just men made perfect” (*PBD* at 808). They are not extinct.

22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering,
23 and to the assembly[a] of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,
24 and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

25 See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven. (Hebrews 12:22-25, *ESV*)

Neither can these verses refer to a future post-resurrection reality because v. 25 clarifies that God here warns men from heaven, now. If verse 23 refers to post-resurrection man, God's warning to obedience meant for those alive on earth would be pointless.

The Jehovah's Witnesses contend that at death no spirit (soul) travels to heaven because they are immediately extinguished, and compare “departed spirits” like those handed back to God by Jesus and the martyr Stephen to the technical change of ownership of a piece of property. They write:

“Then the dust returns to the earth just as it happened to be and the spirit [or, life-force; Hebrew, *ruach*] itself returns to the true God who gave it.” (Notice that the Hebrew word for spirit is *ruach*; but the word translated soul is *nephesh*. The text does not mean that at death the spirit travels all the way to the personal presence of God; rather, any prospects for the person to live again rests with God. In similar usage, we may say that, if required payments are not made by the buyer of a piece of property, the property “returns” to its owner.” (*Reasoning* at 378)

With respect to the Jehovah's Witnesses' comparison to the transfer of property ownership, their analogy is flawed in the extreme. If the seller of a piece of personal property, for instance an automobile, does not receive payment and the buyer is in default, the seller takes back the car – it's not a mere formality of ownership – the dealership will repossess the vehicle and rightfully claim title; it won't destroy the car and make it disappear or burn all of the paperwork and wait until a future time to rebuild the exact same automobile. As with the dealer who sold a car to a buyer and takes it back on default, so God Almighty gives man a spirit (soul) and takes it back at death, which is precisely what Ecclesiastes 12:7 teaches,

whether the disembodied are called souls, spirits or shades. It provides, “the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.”

Ecclesiastes 12:7 is powerful testimony that a man's spirit exists and that it does not vanish at death but travels to God. No other conclusion can be drawn given a normal, reasonable reading of this verse particularly when above-mentioned Hebrews 12:23 specifically states that the pre-resurrection spirits of “just men made perfect” are exactly where Ecclesiastes 12:7 said they would be - with “God the judge of all.” To add weight to this biblical fact is Revelation 6:9-11 where John wrote of his heavenly, pre-resurrection vision, and “saw underneath the alter the souls of those who had been slaughtered because of the witness they bore to the word of God.” These souls (spirits) did not simply vanish into thin air; they exist and are real.

NEPHESH, HEBREW (SOUL)

The Hebrew term *nephesh* is generally translated “soul” in English. *Nephesh* has a variety of meanings and appears over 750 times in the Old Testament. According to “a Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament,” *nephesh* primarily means 1) the life principle, 2) various figurative usages, and 3) a man's soul “that departs at death and returns with life at the resurrection.” (*Brown, Driver, and Briggs, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1953, 1977), 220).

According to *Vine's*, it can mean a breathing creature, animal or man. “*Nephesh* means soul; self; life; person; heart” (at 189, 5315). “(1c) The best biblical definition is found at Psalm 103:1 where *nephesh* is defined as “all that is within a person: 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name.'” “The inner person is *nephesh*” “Soul of man means that 'immortal part, which moves into the afterlife [the body is buried and decomposes] and needs atonement to enter into God's presence upon death'” (*ibid.*) “(5a) Soul parallels the whole individual “him,” or “I” (*ibid.*). ”

The Jehovah's Witnesses on the other hand have developed their own limited definitions for *nephesh*. “Bible usage,” they write, “shows the soul to be a person or an animal or the life that a person or an animal enjoys.” It is not “the principle of life” (*Reasoning* at 375). They teach that no one “has” a soul (*ibid.*); God never gave man a soul, and a man's soul is not the same as his spirit (*Reasoning* at 378). They also believe that spirit (Hebrew, *ruach*) which animates a creature with the “breath of life” is a mere spark, like an electrical charge which dissipates after the engine has been started. Once the body of man dies, they teach, all traces of him, including spirit and soul, disappear and are annihilated (*Reasoning* at 382). There is no spirit in man in the conventional Christian sense, they teach, particularly one which exhibits emotion or thought (*Soul and Spirit*, http://www.watchtower.org/e/bh/appendix_07.htm).

But the Jehovah's Witnesses are wrong on many levels. God doesn't simply deliver a spark of breath to activate the body, but he thereafter actively “forms the spirit of man within him (Zechariah 12:1). “[I]t is a spirit in man, the breath of the Almighty, that gives him understanding” (Job 32:8). Furthermore, God, who is a spirit person, also has, and/or is, a *nephesh* (soul): “And [God's] soul (*nephesh*) was grieved with the misery of Israel” (Judges

10:16; cf Isaiah 1:14 (*Green's Literal Translation*). *Nephesh* (soul) therefore is not limited to material entities, but it can be a spiritual entity, and as we all know, man was created in the image of God.

Traditional Christians have understood *nephesh* (soul) to mean a person or an animal long before the Jehovah's Witnesses' religion first appeared in the mid-nineteenth century. They also agree that *nephesh* (soul) quite often refers to a person or animals, dead or alive. Similarly, traditionalists know full well that *nephesh* can mean "life," all of which ultimately depends on context. But in the Jehovah's Witnesses' elaborate efforts to defend these definitions that need no defending, they have completely missed the point. The primary issue is whether the *nephesh* (soul) can also refer to the immaterial spiritual self, the ego, that conscious entity which survives death and is capable of emotion and thought, which it does, contrary to the Jehovah's Witnesses' false assertion that at death the soul (spirit) is extinguished.

Furthermore, the Jehovah's Witnesses also argue that soul and spirit are not the same, that they are completely separate, which is understandable because if soul and spirit are the same and occasionally synonymous, the Jehovah's Witnesses' theology collapses. Substance dualism, the dichotomy of body and soul (spirit) in Christian thought so evident in the New Testament, is also evident in the Old Testament, though not as pronounced. There, *Nephesh* can refer to the immaterial, spiritual self. It does not simply mean a person, animal or the life one enjoys. At Psalm 49:15 we read where the departed wicked rich are herded alive into their new palace called Sheol, the nether world, and Sheol according to the numerous verses quoted earlier, while metaphorically called the "grave" sometimes, in reality is a place of conscious existence. This has been established beyond a reasonable doubt. And since all men are *nephesh* (souls), the wicked rich are also *nephesh* (souls) who go to Sheol, not in the flesh but as spiritual entities. Therefore the departed *nephesh* (souls) are spiritual.

While the New Testament writers spoke of body-soul dualism (body and soul not being the same) the Old Testament, among its varied definitions of *nephesh*, also includes this dichotomous dual nature, referring to it as the outer man and the inner man. "The inner person is *nephesh*" (*Vine's* at 189). When the Old Testament refers to man as a whole it is nevertheless a unity of body and soul, the holistic oneness of a man composed of two parts (Moreland at 2). When the Bible refers to a *nephesh* (soul) as speaking or thinking, it is referring not to the body, mere flesh, which without the spirit is dead (James 2:26), but to the rational spiritual aspect that is the man proper; that's who we really are.

And this *nephesh* (soul) can be something which is within the person, made clear at Job 14:22 where "his soul (*nephesh*) within him shall mourn." Other verses reaffirm that the soul (*nephesh*) can be something which one has, which therefore was given to man from the Almighty: "[H]er *nephesh* (soul) was vexed within her" (2 Kings 4:27); "My soul is cast down within me," (Psalm 42:6); "[M]y soul fainted within me" (Jonah 2:7).

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN NEPHESH (SOUL) AND RUACH (SPIRIT)

The Hebrew term *ruach* can also mean "spirit," among numerous other definitions, and the fact that *ruach* is also spoken of as being within a person is strong evidence that *nephesh*

(soul) and *ruach* (spirit) in the proper context can be interchangeable terms because they can refer to the same thing. Daniel wrote of his *ruach*'s (spirit's) anguish within its sheath of flesh, the spirit likened to a sword that is inserted and removed from its sheath (Daniel 7:15, NAB). The Hebrew for sheath is *nidneh* (5085), and is defined figuratively as “the body (as the receptacle of the soul” (*Vine's* at 181).

Other Old Testament verses read “the spirit (*ruach*) within me constraineth me” (Job 3:18); Renew in me a steadfast spirit (*ruach*) (Psalm 51:12); “my spirit (*ruach*) is feint within me” (Psalm 142:3(4). The prophet Isaiah knew full well that soul and spirit can refer to the same entity when he bound them together in parallel unity, writing at Isaiah 26:9:

My soul (*nephesh*) yearns for you in the night,
yes, my spirit (*ruach*) within me keeps vigil for you.

The Old Testament soul (*nephesh*) and spirit (*ruach*) exhibit additional traits which indicate they can, in the proper context, refer to each other; they can be synonymous. “*Nephesh* also refers to the seat of emotion, volition, moral attitudes, and desire/longing for God (Micah 7:1; Proverbs 21:10; Isaiah. 26:9; Deuteronomy 6:5; 21:14)” The *nephesh* (soul) has cognitive skills; it can bless (Genesis 27:4), love (1 Kings 2:4), desire (1 Kings 11:37); it can feel anguish (2 Kings 4:27). The list of characteristics of the *nephesh* are considerable, but these things the *nephesh* (soul) does cannot be attributed to mere unanimated flesh, a static body, but rather, that rational, animated aspect of the “person” which is the spiritual aspect, that which makes man human and who we are.

A man's Old Testament spirit (*ruach*) also can display characteristics similar to the immaterial soul (*nephesh*). Brown, Driver and Briggs list nine meanings for *ruach* (spirit) including “the principle of life in humans and animals,” “disembodied spirits,” “the seat of emotions,” and “the seat of mind and will in humans” (Moreland at 3). *Vine's* states that “*ruwach* frequently represents the element of life in a man, his natural “spirit,” (7307 at 259). “At Proverbs 16:2 the word appears to mean more than just the element of life; it seems to mean “soul”: “All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the Lord weigheth the spirits.... Thus, Isaiah can put *nephesh* (5315), “soul,” and *ruwach* in synonymous parallelism: “With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea with my spirit within me will I seek thee early.” *Ruach* is used to describe a man's mind-set, disposition, or temper (Psalm 32:2); it refers to a man's mind and thinking (Ezekiel. 13:3; cf Proverbs 29:11), disposition (Job 2:11), joy (Psalm 51:12), and the cause of volition, or will (Proverbs 16:32)

As illustrated above with literal and metaphorical examples, and supported by linguistic construction, God is rightfully called “God of the spirits of all mankind” (Numbers 16:22; cf 27:16), spirits which are invisible, conscious and independent beings that can exist apart from the body of a person. Many such examples in the Old Testament abound, and the obvious conclusion is that there are unmistakeable similarities between one definition of *nephesh* (soul) which refers to the spiritual, immaterial self, and a man's *ruach* (spirit); often they are synonymous.

It is scripturally illogical to conclude, as the Jehovah's Witnesses do, that a soul (*nephesh*) is

never synonymous with a man's spirit (*ruach*), that the *nephesh* (soul) is only a person, animal, or the life one enjoys, and that man does not possess a *nephesh* (soul), or that a man's *ruach* (spirit) is a mere electrical spark, or breath of life, that animates a body of flesh; or that a man's spirit is only the product of cerebral electrodes and body fluids; or that "the spirit has no feeling and cannot think," and that the spirit is nothing more than "the force that brings our body to life" (Watchtower at 13, from "*Soul and Spirit - What do these Terms Really Mean?*"

The Jehovah's Witnesses' confusion may be attributed in part to rendering every 754 occurrences of *nephesh* as "soul" rather than applying a nuanced interpretation as other Bibles do. (In all fairness to the Watchtower Society, the Jehovah's Witnesses' New World Translation Bible isn't the only culprit.) Non-nuanced versions of *nephesh* lend themselves to ambiguity and confusion given the many varied contexts within which the term is used.

For instance, always translating *nephesh* as soul allows the Jehovah's Witnesses to suggest that traditionalists believe that *nephesh* means a "spiritual soul" every time that term is used, when that is not the case. Illustrative is Joshua 11:11 which provides, "They went striking every soul (*nephesh*) that was in it with the sword." The Jehovah's Witnesses go on to reason that "[t]he soul is here shown to be something that can be touched by the sword, so these souls could not have been spirits" (*Reasoning* at 376). Their argument, however, is not only silly and weak, it is nonexistent because no reasonable person, Christian or not, believes anyone was cutting up spirits with a sword, though such ambiguity allows the Jehovah's Witnesses to claim, against common sense and Scripture, that *nephesh* can never be spiritual and that Christendom believes *nephesh* always means "immortal soul," which it doesn't.

The same can be said for their "reasoned" argument that soul (*nephesh*) and spirit (*ruach*) can never refer to the same thing because the word *nephesh* is not the same word as *ruach*. But such spurious logic is a non-statement and an insult to common sense and the average intelligence. Of course *nephesh* and *ruach* are different words; but the issue in part is whether they both can refer to the same thing, which they can, in the same way that a man can be both a father and a son, or have two names; one person, two labels.

The Jehovah's Witnesses' dilemma in interpreting *nephesh* as "soul" in every instance is especially apparent at Genesis 2:7 where the Jehovah's Witnesses' *NWT* Bible provides that Adam became a living soul (*nephesh*), not that he was given a *nephesh* (soul). The Watchtower Society has gained much traction from this argument because it is awkward (though accurate) to say Adam was a soul and he had a soul (spirit). Accordingly, other Bibles properly translate *nephesh* (soul) as a "living being." Thus, Adam became a "living being."

The Lord God formed man out of the clay of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and so man became a living being.
(literally soul, or *nephesh*). (Genesis 2:7 *NAB, ESV*)

Many Christian theologians believe God injected a soul (spirit) into Adam when He blew into Adam's nostrils the breath of life; that is, the soul (*nephesh*) at times also known as the spirit (*ruach*). While that may be true, the manner and timing of God's creation and insertion

of the soul (spirit) into a man is not that critical because we know that man in fact possesses an immaterial soul (spirit) which survives the death of the body, a scriptural truth revealed in particular detail in the New Testament.

PSUCHE GREEK (SOUL) and PNEUMA GREEK (SPIRIT)

The Greek term “*psuche*” (5590) is most often translated “soul” in English. It stems from the word “breath” and by implication spirit (*Vine's* at 275). *Psuche* can refer to breath, the breath of life which animates the bodies of man and animal; life, “that in which there is life, a living being, a living soul” (*Vine's* at 275). It can also mean the soul, the seat of “feelings, desires, affections and aversions” … [and is] regarded as a moral being designed for everlasting life” (*ibid*). Significantly, for purposes of this discussion, *psuche* (soul) can also refer to “an essence which differs from the body and is not dissolved by death (distinguished from other parts of the body), (Matthew 10:28, Revelation 6:9)) (*Vine's* at 275). Thus it is similar to the Hebrew soul (*nephesh*) and spirit (*ruach*), and the Greek *pneuma*, most often translated “spirit” in English.

Spirit (*pneuma*, 4151) in the New Testament, when it refers to the spirit of a man, is defined in *Vine's* as a literal or figurative current of air, breath or breeze; figuratively as a spirit, the human rational soul, and by implication the vital principle of man; and it can refer to Christ's spirit, and the Holy Spirit (*Vine's* at 205).

Scholars have long recognized that in the New Testament, *psuche* (soul) and *pneuma* (spirit) are often used interchangeably; that while soul and spirit can never be separated and are independent entities, they can be distinguished based upon particular relationships and context.

Regarding a man's soul (*psuche*) and a man's spirit (*pneuma*) often as synonymous is well-attested in the New Testament. For instance, men are spoken of as “giving up the spirit (*pneuma*) (Matthew 27:50; John 19:30; Luke 23:46; 24:37), in the same sense that man gives up the soul, as used at Acts 5:5, 10, and 12:23 where the term *akpsicho* (1634) is invoked, meaning “To expire – give up the ghost, yield up the ghost … literally to breath out the soul (or life), to give up the ghost” (*Vine's* at 83).

Paul wrote of the perennial human struggle between the temptations of the flesh at war against the spirit: “For the flesh has desires against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you may not do what you want” (Galatians 5:16). Peter referred to the same battle when he wrote of man's “lusts which war against the soul” (1 Peter 2:11), thereby equating the soul with the spirit. Paul spoke of turning a sinner over to Satan in order to save his spirit (*pneuma*) (1 Corinthians 5:5), but the object of salvation is, among other things, to save men's souls. And at Hebrews 12:23 and Revelation 6:9 we see both spirits and souls in heaven; they can't be separate entities under any scenario, but are the same entity under different names.

The Jehovah's Witnesses' belief that a man's spirit is nothing more than an “impersonal force” like electricity and “has no feeling and cannot think” is not supported by the New Testament. For example, Paul wrote of how God's Holy Spirit “bears witness with our spirit

that we are children of God,” and that through our spirit of adoption “we cry, ‘Abba, Father!’” (Romans 8:15, 16). This requires the ability to think on the part of man’s spirit. Paul admonishes his believers to be renewed in the spirit of their minds. He did not teach that the spirit was a mindless non-existent entity (Ephesians 4:23). John, in warning against false prophets, wrote that “every spirit that acknowledges Jesus Christ come in the flesh belongs to God” (1 John 4:2), and such acknowledgment necessitates a spirit’s existence and cognitive skills.

Many other examples can be found that prove that the Jehovah’s Witnesses’ claims are baseless and grossly unscriptural. Man is not merely a breathing piece of flesh animated by a jolt of electricity whose non-existent spirit is incapable of emotion or thought, before or after death.

Like the *nephesh* (soul) and *ruach* (spirit) of the Old Testament, the spirit/soul (*pneuma/psuche*) of the New Testament is, in the proper context, something which resides in a man, like Daniel’s spirit inside its sheath of flesh (Daniel 7:15), and Job’s spirit that was “within him” (Job 32:8). At Ephesians 3:16 he wrote of the Holy Spirit strengthening the “inner self.” James wrote of the spirit that is within us as lusting or has a tendency toward jealousy (James 4:5). Jesus Christ could not be “with” our spirit, as it says he can at 2 Timothy 4:22, unless a cognitive spirit within man exists.

RESPONSE TO THE JEHOVAH’S WITNESSES’ ARGUMENTS

The Jehovah’s Witnesses are under the mistaken belief that body/soul dualism and immortality is nothing more than a product of pagan Greek philosophy. They teach that early Christian philosophers simply adopted the Greek idea of the immortality of the soul, that the body/soul dichotomy is nothing more than a rehashed pagan philosophy. As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, the Bible and traditional Christianity teach that God creates a soul which is infused at conception, it is indestructible by secondary sources, and therefore is not inherently immortal. Christian dualism is not the same as Greek body/soul dualism, or the Jehovah’s Witnesses’ version of it.

The Jehovah’s Witnesses go to great lengths to suggest that early “Christian philosophers” inspired or manufactured dualism as a result of Greek influence. But Jesus was not such a Greek or early Christian philosopher; neither were Paul or James or Peter or John. Their inspiration for revealing to man the body/soul relationship comes from Almighty God, for “all Scripture is inspired by God,” (2 Timothy 3:16), not Origen or Aquinas, and most certainly not Plato or any number of contradicting and amorphous Greek philosophers. Christian philosophers might have shaped and illuminated for our understanding body/soul dualism, but the source material has always been the Bible, particularly the New Testament.

Greek theories on the nature of the soul were abundant and varied leading up to the Christian era. “Greco-Roman philosophy made no further progress in the doctrine of the soul in the age immediately preceding the Christian era. None of the existing theories had found general acceptance, and in the literature of the period an eclectic spirit nearly akin to skepticism nearly predominated (newadvent.org/cath/14153a.htm). Foremost among these philosophers was Plato whose theories are often considered vague and irreconcilable. While the Jehovah’s

Witnesses are correct in stating that Plato believed “the soul is immortal” (*Reasoning* at 379), they left out his qualifying statement in *Timeaus* denying intrinsic, indestructible, absolute immortality of the soul, but admitting of an “immortality conditional on the good pleasure of God” (newadvent.org), which is precisely what soul creationists believe and which is self-evident in Scripture. The relevant passage in *Timeaus* where “God” speaks provides,

"Gods, children of gods, who are my works, and of whom I am the artificer and father, my creations are indissoluble, if so I will. All that is bound may be undone."

[God] put intelligence in soul, and soul in body, that he might be the creator of a work which was by nature fairest and best. Wherefore, using the language of probability, we may say that the world became a living creature truly endowed with soul and intelligence by the providence of God.

To this extent Plato was correct according to the Bible.

Since man's soul is immortal and only God has immortality (1 Timothy 6:16), man's soul must have been given to man by God. Man's immortality is therefore not absolute like God's, but nonetheless not subject to destruction by secondary sources.

The mere fact that Plato, and others, developed rudimentary concepts of dualism and the immortal soul before the Christian era does not mean the New Testament Christian writers, and Jesus, incorporated Greek philosophy into Scripture anymore than the writer(s) of Genesis derived his account of the great flood of Noah's time from the Gilgamesh Epic dated centuries before Genesis was written. In fact, Plato's belief that man's immortality exists as long as God wills it reinforces the obvious truth found in the New Testament.

To reiterate, mainstream Christianity does not teach “inherent immortality”; that man's immortal soul has always preexisted (eternity backwards), or that it cannot be destroyed or extinguished by any entity whatsoever. Rather, traditionalists subscribe to the soul-creationist theory, that YHWH, God Almighty, who alone is absolutely immortal, creates the soul of man which he infuses into humans at conception. The immortal soul cannot be destroyed by any secondary sources, those other than God, who would not be all-powerful if he could not vanquish his own creation.

The human soul is immortal because God wills it. This illustrates the Jehovah's Witnesses' utter confusion with respect to the Christian doctrine of immortality of the soul and the role Greek philosophy plays, or does not play, in Christian theology; a widely perpetuated misunderstanding which misleads many unfamiliar with the issues and core Christian doctrine.

The Jehovah's Witnesses rely heavily on Ecclesiastes 3:19-21 in their argument that a human does not have a “spirit that goes on living as an intelligent personality after it ceases to function in the body” (*Reasoning* at 383). But from what you've read thus far you know this

to be false. Ecclesiastes 3:19-21 provides:

19 There is an eventuality as respects the sons of mankind and an eventuality as respects the beast, and they have the same eventuality. As the one dies, so the other dies; and they all have but one spirit (*NAB* the “same life breath”), so that there is no superiority of the man over the beast, for everything is vanity. 20 All are going to one place. They have all come to be from the dust, and they are all returning to the dust. 21 Who is there knowing the spirit of the sons of mankind, whether it is ascending upward; and the spirit of the beast, whether it is ascending downward to the earth.

The Jehovah's Witnesses contend that according to verse 19 humans and beasts “all have but one spirit,” the same spirit (*Reasoning* at 383). “There is nothing,” they write, “that humans have as a result of birth that gives them superiority over beasts when they die (*ibid.*). Misconstruing these verses, and omitting others, the Jehovah's Witnesses fail to understand that the death referred to is that of the body, not the immaterial soul (spirit), because that place where both beasts and man eventually go to is the dust of the earth awaiting decomposition. Man's soul (spirit), as an immaterial being, does not return to dust and decompose. It is only in that physiological respect that man has no superiority over the beast when he dies; both eventually rot in the ground (rapture aside). The writer was not stating, nor can it be implied, that no such thing as a spirit exists which might survive death. The opposite is true because he candidly acknowledges the existence of man's surviving spirit in verse 21 where he writes, “Who knows whether the spirit of man goes upward...? (*RSV*). He wasn't denying the existence of man's spirit, but affirming it, though not knowing where man's spirit ultimately ends up.

The Jehovah's Witnesses, as they frequently do, have taken the phrase, “there is no superiority of the man over the beast” completely out of context. Man is in fact superior to the beast over which he has dominion. Man is superior because he is created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), whereas the beast is not. The resemblance to God is not physical, but spiritual because God Almighty, YHWH, is a spirit (John 4:24) and has, and/or is, a soul (*nephesh*).

Furthermore, the man Adam (and Eve), as originally constituted at creation, enjoyed inherent superiority over animals at birth because he could live forever unless he disobeyed God and ate of the forbidden fruit (Genesis 2:5). No other creatures had this option.

Additionally, redeemed, saved believers are assured at death of enjoying the immediate presence of God and Christ in heaven and are assured of inheriting the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world (Matthew 25:34); the righteousness, unlike the beast, are bound for “eternal life” (Matthew 25:46). That, among other things, is what elevates man over beast, profoundly.

Also, Psalm 49:21 (*NAB*) makes it clear that the fate of man, compared to the beast, is contingent. It is not an absolute destiny in all respects. Referring to the wicked rich who put their trust in wealth rather than the Almighty, it provides, “for all their riches, if mortals do

not have wisdom they perish like the beast,” which modifies verse 19 of Ecclesiastes chapter 3. Conversely, the logical implication is that if mortals do have wisdom, they won’t perish like the beast, an option not available to earthly creatures other than man. To clarify any ambiguity, Bibles such as the Revised Standard Version ascribe to spirit (*ruach*) the proper nuance; distinguishing the activating “breath” which is the same for man and beast, but recognizing in verse 21 that the writer was speaking of the immaterial soul (spirit), providing, “They all (man and beast) have the same breath....” and, “Who knows whether the spirit of man goes upward ...?”

The Jehovah’s Witnesses’ theory that nothing exists of man after death is premised primarily on a handful of Old Testament verses, once again taken out of context while ignoring other relevant passages. For instance,

... there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol (nether world *NAB*) to which you are going (Ecclesiastes 9:10, *RSV*)

His spirit goes out, he goes back to his ground; in that day his thoughts do perish (Psalm 146:4)

For the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward; but the memory of them is lost (Ecclesiastes 9:5, *RSV*)

The Jehovah’s Witnesses reason that if a dead person knows nothing and has no thoughts because thoughts perish at death, he cannot be conscious and must therefore be extinct, non-existent. A superficial reading might lead one to that conclusion, be we know that's not the case because the departed, such as the Old Testament *rephaim* or “shades,” as outlined in great detail above, are indeed conscious and can think, communicate and exhibit other cognitive skills. Contrary to the Jehovah’s Witnesses’ incorrect interpretation, these thoughts, knowledge, rewards, etc. refer to those human traits while on earth, “under the sun,” not in the immediate afterlife, the intermediate state where conscious departed souls dwell. This is made abundantly clear in verse 6 following Ecclesiastes 9:5:

Their love and their hate and their envy have already perished, and they have no more forever any share in all that is done under the sun. (Psalm 9:6, *RSV*) (emphasis added).

Accordingly, other Bibles use the word “planning,” such as, “their planning comes to nothing” (Psalm 146:4, *NAB*).

Furthermore, verse 6 completely undermines the Jehovah’s Witnesses’ multiple salvation plans. They believe that a ruling elite of 144,000 Jehovah’s Witnesses will eventually reign from heaven over a vast multitude of converted Jehovah’s Witnesses on earth. For the majority of mankind, the Jehovah’s Witnesses’ salvation mantra is, “You can live forever in paradise on earth.” But Ecclesiastes 9:6 just quoted makes that impossible. If the dead “never again have part in anything that is done under the sun (on earth), they cannot live forever in paradise on earth. Mainstream Christianity averts this conundrum because they recognize that the Christian’s supernatural reward is in heaven for all redeemed believers. It

most certainly is not limited to 144,000 Jehovah's Witnesses.

Two other verses heavily relied on in their attempt to prove postmortem non-existence are Romans 6:23 and Ezekiel 18:4. Romans 6:23 provides in part: "For the wages of sin is death." Although they invoke this verse attempting to prove at death no departed souls exist, it is more fitting in the context of post-resurrection life as the remainder of the verse makes clear. Because all men sin and die, they cannot continue living in an immaterial disembodied state, they claim. But verse 23 does not specify the nature of such death, nor does it apply to all men, but rather to the unredeemed and unsaved made evident by the second half of the sentence which pinpoints the time frame: "but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Verse 23 parallels Matthew 25:46, "And these will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life." Though Christians might sin, their transgressions are forgiven (Jeremiah 31:31-34), and they are passed over in the final judgment: "Whoever hears my words and believes in the one who sent me has eternal life and will not come to condemnation, but has passed from death to life" (John 5:24). It is the unredeemed sinner who dies.

Ezekiel 18:4 appears to be the crown jewel in the Jehovah's Witnesses' annihilationist argument. The prophet Ezekiel wrote in part that "The soul (*nephesh*) that is sinning – it itself will die" ("only the one who sins shall die," *NAB*). The Jehovah's Witnesses imply that traditionalists are wrong believing the soul (*nephesh*) is an immaterial spiritual entity because it can die, which also would mean it cannot be immortal. But they are reading too much (or not enough) into this sentence and attribute an interpretation to mainstream Christians that isn't there. Standing back and placing verse 4 into context, it is apparent that chapter 18 deals with personal responsibility. Contrasted with the death of the sinner, a virtuous man shall "surely live" (Ezekiel 18:9). The people shall not be punished for their ancestors' sins, only their own (*NAB*, notes 18,2) [... his death shall be his own fault]. Verse 18 reads, a virtuous man "shall not die for the sins of his father." Here, Ezekiel was not making a sweeping statement that all men die, nor was he making a statement that a *nephesh* (soul) cannot under any circumstances refer to the immortal soul simply because the soul (*nephesh*) that sins dies. If that were true it would actually make the case for immortality because according to chapter 18 the soul that does not sin does not die if one were to take their argument to its logical conclusion.

We can safely assume, therefore, that death in 18:4 refers foremost to a physical death as punishment for particular sins because, after all, all men die a mortal death, but more importantly, Ezekiel lists the kinds of sins God had in mind which warrant death under the Mosaic Law to which he was referring.

The Hebrew word here for death is *muwth* (4191) "which is used of physical death." (*Vine's* at 151). It can also refer to eventual, natural mortality, and a spiritual death. God told "man that he will surely die if he eats of the forbidden fruit. (Genesis 2:17). "When Adam and Eve ate of the fruit, both spiritual and physical death came upon Adam and Eve and their descendants (cf. Rom 5:12). They experienced spiritual death immediately" (*Vine's* at 151).

God's declaration at Ezekiel 18:1-32 that each man is responsible for his own sins, and that person alone would deserve punishment – which is the core theme of chapter 18 – was

emphasized in verses 10-13 in the extreme with specific examples of crimes under the Mosaic Law deserving of death, with the exception of theft, robbery and variants thereof such as failure to return a pledge and usury. Crimes specifically deserving death were murder (Numbers 35:16), eating on the mountains (a form of idol worship (Exodus 22:20), defiling a wife (Leviticus 20:10), oppressing the poor and needy (thereby endangering their lives) (Exodus 21-29) such as harming orphans and widows (a term of art for all helpless, needy and destitute (Exodus 22:20-23), or any “abominable thing,” - a wide-ranging concept that may include, but is not limited to, blasphemy (Leviticus 24:16; 1 Kings 21:10), kidnapping (Exodus 21:16), and witchcraft (Exodus 22:18).

By no means is this an exhaustive list of those crimes for which each individual is held personally accountable pursuant to chapter 18. The fact that theft and robbery, etc., are not punishable by death is no reason to assume the soul (*nephesh*) which sins and dies refers to the extinction of the immortal soul as the Jehovah's Witnesses would have you believe. To the contrary; if anything, it illustrates that lesser real-time crimes and sins are included in the doctrine of personal responsibility. Otherwise, a man would not be personally responsible for his own lesser sins, which is illogical and defies the spirit of God's law.

While death, or *muwth*, refers to physical death, which reasonably presumes inclusion of lesser sins and crimes, here it also refers to a spiritual death, however that may be defined; a cutting off or separation from God. After all, Paul was very succinct when he wrote that neither adulterers, thieves or robbers, and many others, will inherit God's kingdom (1 Corinthians 6:10), thereby dying a death of unimaginable severity. Nothing can logically be inferred in Ezekiel 18:1-4 that God was stating that disembodied, immaterial souls don't exist or survive a person's death. He was not saying that souls aren't immortal because they die and are thus extinguished. To the contrary, the message throughout the Old and New Testament is crystal clear. A conscious, immaterial spiritual entity, a man's ego or self, alternatively called shades, souls or spirits, survives death and immediately is transferred to the intermediate state of the after life of the nether world awaiting reunion with one's resurrected body. They are not annihilated. They are not made extinct as the Jehovah's Witnesses teach.